

HISTORY

OF THE

TOWN OF GROTON, Mass.

INCLUDING PEPPERELL AND SHIRLEY,

FROM THE

FIRST GRANT OF GROTON PLANTATION IN 1655.

WITH APPENDICES,

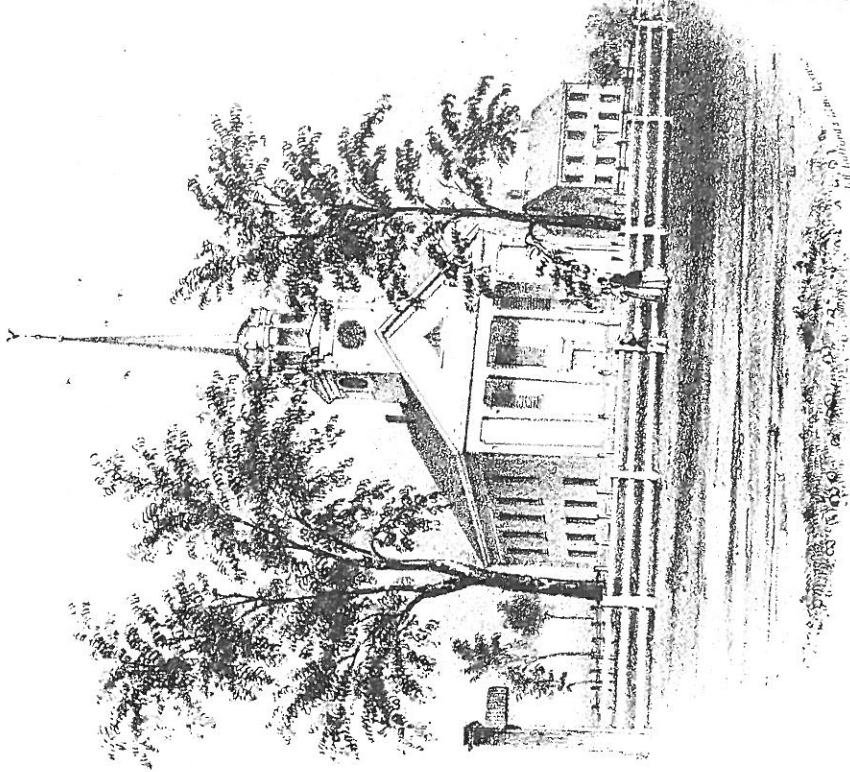
CONTAINING

FAMILY REGISTERS, TOWN AND STATE OFFICERS, POPULATION,
AND OTHER STATISTICS.

BY CALEB BUTLER.

"Pleraque eorum qua referam parva forsitan et levia memoratu videri, non
nescius sum."—*Tacitus*.

"Small things, in the beginning of natural or politic bodies, are as remarkable
as greater, in bodies full grown."—*Gov. Dudley's Letter to Countess of Lincoln*.



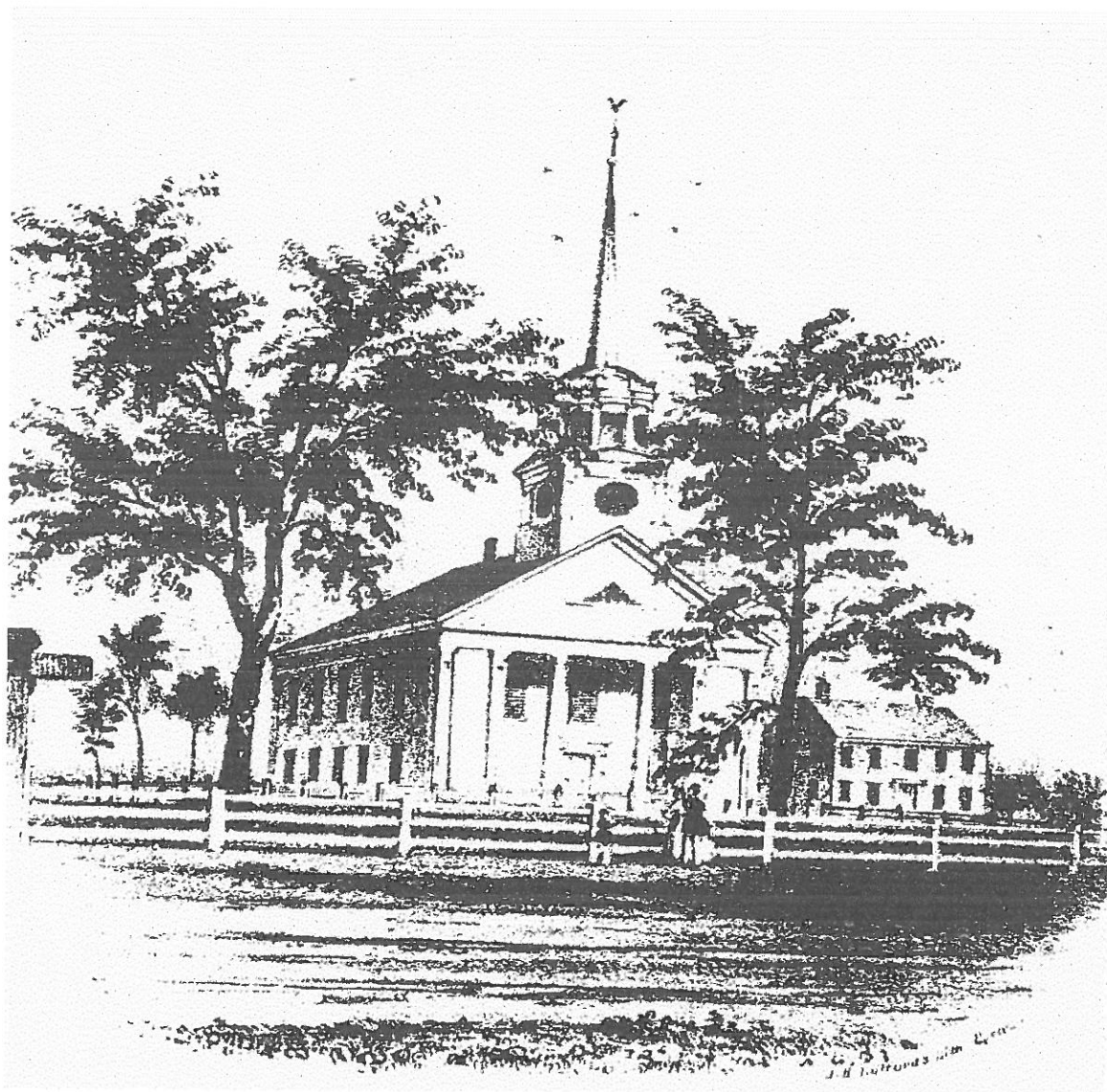
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HISTORY
OF THE TOWN OF
GROTON MASSACHUSETTS
INCLUDING PEPPERELL AND SHIRELY

[EXCERPTS]



FIRST PARISH MEETING HOUSE

GROTON AND PEPPERELL FAMILIES

BLOOD

This name is very common in this town, and others in its vicinity, and has been so ever since the first settlement. Four of the name are among the original proprietors of Groton, viz., Richard, Robert, James, and Joseph. Richard and Robert are named as petitioners for the plantation, and Richard was one of the first board of selectmen chosen by the inhabitants. He was continued in that office several years, and in 1668 was town clerk.

Of all the original proprietors, Richard Blood was the largest. He owned a sixty acre right. The next highest was a fifty acre right. Either by accident or for some cause now unknown, the lands of the Bloods are not recorded in the Indian Roll or in the book transcribed from it by John Morse, in 1683. They are for the first time described by the proprietors' committee, in 1739, and afterwards recorded. Richard lived at the place called "Nod." He was son of James Blood of Concord, and from him probably descended most of the Bloods in Groton and Pepperell. He died at Groton, 7d. 10 mo., 1683, (not 1692, as stated by Farmer). A large number of families are recorded. They resided in the north part of the town, and many of them were included in Pepperell and Dunstable, in the divisions of the town.

FARWELL

This has ever been a prevalent name in the south-east and south part of Groton. Two of the name, Joseph and Thomas, were chosen deacons of the church; but it does not appear that Thomas ever officiated.

Henry, the son of William Farwell, Sen., born July 21, 1724, was a soldier in the French wars, and was captain of one of the companies of minute men in Groton, at the commencement of the revolutionary war. He marched with his company, on the 19th of April, 1775, to Cambridge; was in the battle of Bunker Hill, and was severely wounded. A musket ball passed through his body, lodging near the spine, whence it was extracted in the evening after the battle. He engraved upon the ball the figures 1775, and kept it as a precious relic. He was a man of small stature, but very strong and athletic, and of undaunted courage. He died in 1803.

Naomi Farwell, daughter of William Farwell, born August 16, 1769, sustained a character somewhat noted, on account of her solitary and unsocial habits and manners, which gave her the title of hermitess. She lived with her father and mother, while they lived, in a poor small house, about a mile north of the village, and after their decease entirely alone, in the same place. She inherited from her father, of whom she was sole heir, a farm of about eighty acres of good land, upon and at the foot of "Chestnut Hills," a large portion of which had never been stripped of its native forest trees. Of this, after the death of her father, she superintended the management, constantly laboring with her own hands, and hiring only in the most busy seasons of the year. It is said by her biographer, "The seclusion of her abode, her eccentric habits, and the romantic beauty of the walks over her domain, together with her reputation for skill in palmistry, rendered a stroll through Naomi's grounds a favorite promenade for young people." By the dreariness of her abode and the severity of winter, she contracted a cold, which brought her to a premature death, January 1, 1838.

GILSON

Joseph Gilson was one of the original proprietors of Groton, owning a nine acre right. One of the same name from Groton was in Lovell's fight, escaped unhurt, and returned home. The name has ever prevailed in the town to the present time. Probably all are descendants from the abovementioned Joseph. They have resided in those parts of the town set off to Pepperell and Dunstable, and northerly and easterly parts as it is present. They are not known to have been particularly distinguished from the industrious yeomanry and common municipal and military officers of the town.

LAWRENCE

The first account of the ancestor of the numerous families of this name, in Groton and Pepperell, which can be relied upon as certain, is, that he was an inhabitant of Watertown as early as 1635. He probably came from England in the company which came with Governor Winthrop in 1630. His given name was John, and that of his wife was Elizabeth. Whether they were married in England or not, has not been ascertained. Their eldest child was born at Watertown, 14th 1 m. 1635. They had twelve children born at Watertown, and after their removal to Groton, the wife died, and the husband married a widow, Mary Batchelder of Boston, by whom he had two more. February 28, 1636, John Lawrence, of Watertown, had assigned to him, by the freemen of that town, three acres "of the plowlands at Beverbroke plains," now Waltham. April 17, 1637, he took the freeman's oath. He removed to Groton, with probably all his family, at an early period of its settlement, as his name is found in the records there in 1663. He was an original proprietor, having a twenty acre right, his sons, Nathaniel had a ten acre, and Joseph a five acre right. It is doubtful whether his oldest son, John, resided long at Groton. The only mention found of him in the records is this, "John Morse, of Ipswich, is accepted by the town to possess the allotment of John Lawrence, junior's." Morse had a twelve acre right, probably all purchased of John Lawrence, Jr.

John Lawrence, Sen., made his will, April 24, 1667, in which most of his children named in the family list are noticed, five of their children of the first wife as minors. After making provision for his wife and her two daughters, he gives the rest and residue of his estate to all his children by his former wife, with this singular proviso, that Mary should have but half a share, "to teach her a remembrance of her disobedience and unfaithfulness to me in my distress." Jonathan, his eleventh child, was he who gave one hundred pounds to the town for the purchase of a bell, and bequests to the church and minister of Groton.

Nathaniel, his second son, and his descendants, deserve a more particular notice. He married Sarah Moss, or Morse, of Sudbury, by whom he had seven children, and afterwards there by a second wife. He was an ensign in the militia, a deacon in the church, and one of the first representatives of the town under the charter of William and Mary, in 1693. After this, he removed with his family to that part of Cambridge which is now Lexington, and died there March 12, 1746, leaving a large number of children, of whom Thomas, William and Amos, came to Groton and there lived and died.

Thomas was the great-grandfather of Deacon Curtis Lawrence of Groton, and of Hon. Asa F. Lawrence of Pepperell.

Col. William Lawrence married Susanna, one of the eight daughters of Jonas Prescott, Esq., and lived on the spot where Liberty Hall now stands. He occupied a station among

his fellow townsmen, and the public, similar to that of Cap[t. James Parker, Jonas Prescott, Esq., and Hon. Benjamin Prescott, before him, and of the Hon. Oliver, and Col. James Prescott, after him. The inscription upon the slab of slate placed over the remains of him and his wife, in language more plain and expressive, than elegant or tasteful, gives, it is believed, a true sketch of their lives and characters.

"Here lie the remains of Col. William Lawrence, who departed this life May 19, 1764, aet. 67. He was a gentleman, who in military life rose from the rank of Capt. Lieut., to the command of a regiment. In the year 1739, he was made justice of the peace, afterwards, quorum unus, a special justice of the court of common pleas for the county of Middlesex, and standing justice of the court. He for many years represented the town of Groton, with the districts of Pepperell and Shirley, in the General Assembly of this Province. In all public betrustment he acquitted himself with fidelity and honor. In private life his behavior was becoming his Christian profession. He was remarkably industrious in the improvement of time; just in his dealings; a good neighbor and faithful friend; patient of injuries and ready to forgive them; grateful to benefactors; very ready in affording assistance to the widow and fatherless, and merciful to all objects of pity. He was a strict observer of the Lord's day; a constant and serious attender on the public exercises of religion; a devout worshipper of God in his family.

Here also lies buried the body of Mrs. Susanna Lawrence, relict of the above-named William Lawrence. She was a woman of piety and good sense, an industrious prudent wife, an indulgent parent, a good neighbor, a faithful friend, a hater of hipocrisy and guile, a lover of hospitality, patient under affliction, and resigned to the will of Heaven in death, by which she was called out of the world, to receive the rewards of a faithful servant, on the 10th of September, in the 80th year of her age, A.D. 1771.

These were the parents of six children. William, their eldest son, was settled minister in Lincoln. Abel was the town clerk, and a selectman in Groton, and a justice of the peace. He was father of the late Abel Lawrence, Esq., of Salem.

Capt. Amos Lawrence, the youngest son of John Lawrence of Lexington, after removing to Groton, married Abigail Abbott of Lincoln, by whom he had three sons, who lived to the age of manhood and had families in Groton, viz., Amos, Nehemiah and Samuel. A son and grandson of Amos, Jr., are living in the State of Illinois. Nehemiah had four daughters, but no sons.

Deacon Samuel Lawrence, the youngest son of Capt. Amos Lawrence, Sen., was an officer in the continental army, in the former part of the Revolutionary War. He was in the battle on Bunker's hill, where a musket ball passed through his beaver hat. He was also in the battle at Rhode Island, where he served as adjutant under Gen. Sullivan.

On the 22d day of July, 1777, being at home on a furlough, for the express purpose, he was married to Susanna Parker. While the marriage ceremony was being performed, the alarm bell rung to call all officers and soldiers to their posts at Cambridge. He immediately obeyed the summons of his country; but on his arrival at the camp, the Colonel, knowing the circumstances of the case, gave him a furlough for a few days, at the expiration of which, he joined the army at Rhode Island.

Having faithfully served in the cause of his country during the term of his engagement, he returned to his native town to enjoy the peace and quiet of domestic life on his farm. He was elected by his townsmen to some of the highest offices in their gift; he was a deacon of the church, and a justice of the peace, quorum unus. He took a deep interest in providing means for the education of youth; particularly in establishing and supporting the Seminary in Groton, which now in gratitude to him and his sons bears the family name. Of this institution he was a trustee thirty-three years, and in its benefits and advantages he gave ample opportunities for all his children to participate. Here, their minds undoubtedly received some of those early impressions, the developments and consequences of which it will be the work of their biographers hereafter to portray. No deduction, however, should here be made from the importance of parental instruction, to add to the merit of academical education. The correct lessons given by the mother in the nursery, are as necessary to give the right inclination to the tender mind, as are those of the tutor in the highest seminary, to prepare it for the business of life and intellectual greatness. In the present case, all the duties incumbent on a mother to teach her offspring to be good, and consequently great, were discharged with fidelity and success. Both parents lived to see, in the subjects of their care, all that they could reasonably hope or desire. He died November 8, 1827, aet. 73, and his venerable widow, May 2, 1845, aet. 89.

PRESCOTT

[Prescott family information is thought to be significant due to the Prescott name begun at this time and continuing throughout the Wright family for four generations. The significance of the Prescott's in Pepperell must have somehow been important to Josiah Wright. It is possible that they were neighbors and / or friends. RCB]

The name Prescott deservedly holds a conspicuous place in the annals of Groton. John, the first of whom we have any precise and authentic account, was born in Lancashire, England, and married Mary Platts, of Yorkshire, by whom he had three sons and four daughters. On leaving England, he first went to Barbadoes, where he was a proprietor of lands, in 1638. About the year 1640, he came to Massachusetts, first stopped at Watertown, but soon settled at Nashua, afterwards incorporated and called Lancaster, probably from his native county in old England. He was a blacksmith by occupation, and was also a builder of mills. He had in his possession, brought from England, a coat of mail, armour, and habiliments complete, such as were worn by field officers of that day; whence it has been supposed, that he or some of his ancestors were warriors, and some one of them might have received the order of knighthood.

Of this armour and its owner the following anecdotes are told:

John was a sturdy, strong man of a stern countenance, and whenever he had any difficulty with the Indians, he would clothe himself with his coat of mail, helmet, cuirass, and gorget, which gave him a fierce and frightful appearance. They having once stolen from him a horse, he put on his armour and pursued them; and in a short time overtook the party. They were surprised to see him alone, and a chief approached him with uplifted tomahawk. John told him to strike, which he did, and finding the blow made no impression on his cap, he was much astonished, and asked John to let him put it on, and then strike on his head, as he had don on John's. The helmet being too small for the chief's head, the stroke settled it down to his ears, scraping off the skin on both sides

of his head. They gave him up his horse, thinking him to be a supernatural being.

At another time, the Indians set fire to his barn. Old John put on his armour, rushed out, drove them off, and let out his cattle and horses from the burning stable. Again, the Indians set fire to his saw-mill. The old man, armed cap-a-pie, as before, drove them off and extinguished the fire. Once more, they attacked John's house. He had several muskets in the house, which his wife loaded, and he discharged upon them with fatal effect. The contest continued nearly half an hour, John all the while giving orders, as if to soldiers, so loud the Indians could hear him, to load their muskets, though he had no soldiers but his wife. At length they withdrew, carrying off several of their dead or wounded.

John Prescott had three sons, John, Jonathan, and Jonas. The last of these only will be noticed in this sketch.

Jonas Prescott was born at Lancaster, Massachusetts, June, 1648. He, or his father for him, built the mill in the south part of the town, now within the limits of Harvard, as has been stated in a former chapter; and having purchased a thirty acre right, and bought lands of individuals, he became one of the largest landholders in the town. He received no devise, legacy, or inheritance from his father, who stated in his will, that he had received his full proportion, in the mill and land at Monafocus, (probably the Indian name of the place where the mill stood), still called the "Old Mill," in Harvard. He married Mary,

The story of Jonas and Mary:

A romantic story has come down, by family tradition, to the present generation, of the courtship of this loving pair of fruitful progenitors, and is still preserved with much accuracy, it is presumed, as a nursery tale. John Loker, of whom we have no other account than as connected with this affair, is said to have been wealthy, and he and his wife to have been somewhat aristocratic in their feelings and notions. Having only one daughter, and she exceedingly fair and of good promise, they disdained to betroth her to a blacksmith, the son of a blacksmith, however rich and otherwise unexceptionable he might be. They had set their hearts upon Mary's marrying a lawyer. So when they found that there was a strong attachment between their idol, the fair Mary, and the young blacksmith, they remonstrated, but unwitting pursued a direct course to foster and strengthen it. They forbade his entering their house, or having any communication whatever with their daughter; and the more effectually to prevent any intercourse, they grated the windows of her apartment in the house; and when they thought there was any danger of an interview between them, they locked her in. Jonas, however, was not to be baffled by grates and locks. He took opportunities, when the cold night wind blew, and the pelting storm raged, when no listener could overhear the soft whispering of true lovers, to place himself beneath her grated window, and there enjoy sweet communion with his dearly beloved. Their intercourse was soon discovered by the chagrined parents; and the next expedient resorted to was to place Mary in some secluded spot, under the care of some watchful and faithful guardian. Chockset, now called Sterling, then a frontier settlement, was chosen as the place of her seclusion. Jonas searched the country around, and made diligent inquiry to find the place of her banishment, for some time in vain. At length, being one day in the wilds of Chockset, he made his usual inquiry of some

young men he saw, if they had any pretty girls in their neighborhood. They told him there was to be a quilting that very day, where all their girls would be; that they themselves were going in the evening to dance with them, and invited him to be one of the party, where he might see for himself. He cheerfully accepted the invitation; and on arriving at the cottage where the seamstresses of the settlement were assembled, whom should he there find, but his adored Mary Loker. This was indeed a happy adventure. Concealing, as well as they could, their former acquaintance, they took opportunities to be partners in the dance, and made assignments for future meetings. Having thus fortunately discovered the place of her banishment, he renewed his visits, till her parents finding it out, took her home. She was then sternly told, that she must reject the blacksmith, and receive the addresses of the lawyer. She resolutely replied, "she would never marry to any one but Jonas Prescott." The rejoinder was, "Then you shall never have a farthing of our property." To this there was a general demurrer; a decree for marriage without dowry followed. The consummation took place before even the most common utensils for housekeeping could be procured; (some delay might have been made, to see if the old folks would not relent, and provide her some;) the tradition positively asserts, that her only implement for boiling was a two quart kettle, and her wash-tub, the shell of a large pumpkin. From this happy pair sprung the doctors, warriors, civilians, statesmen, noticed in the text; with other numerous descendants, of whom Mary lived to see one hundred and seventy-five.

the only daughter of John Loker, of Sudbury, by whom he had four sons and eight daughters. Two of the sons died young; all the other children married, and were blest with a numerous offspring. The eight daughters, (except Dorothy, who married John Varnum, Esq. Of Dracutt), all married into respectable families in Groton, and having many children their posterity soon became a multitude. His house and blacksmith's shop stood between the present residence of the Hon. Stuart J. Park and the brook. Upon the resettlement of the town, after its destruction by the Indians, he built mills at Forge village, now in Westford, but then in Groton, as has already been stated. He was town clerk in 1691, a selectman several years, a captain of the militia, a justice of the peace, and represented the town in the General Court in 1699, and 1705. He was much employed in business of a public nature, taking a similar station in the community to that of Capt. James Parker before him. He died December 31, 1723, aet. 75 years. In his will, which in the introductory part is very similar to that of Capt. J. Parker, before recited he gives his wife the use and improvement of all his real estate during her life, and makes her residuary legatee of his personal estate, and executrix of his will. To Jonas, Jr. he gives one cow, and from expressions used, he had probably given him his lands and mills at the forge by deed before. To Benjamin, his real estate, after the death of his widow; to six of his daughters, viz., Elizabeth Green, Dorothy Varnum, Abigail Parker, Martha Hobart and Susanna Lawrence, forty pounds each; and to each of the children of his deceased daughters, Sarah Longley and Deborah Parker, four pounds each.

SHATTUCK

The ancestor of most, if not all, of this name, in New England, is William Shattuck of Watertown. At what time he came to this country is not precisely known. He was at Watertown some time about 1640, and possessed a large estate. He died August 14, 1672, and left a numerous family of children, as appears by his will.

The first appearance of the name at Groton, is in a mutilated record, of which the following is a copy of what remains legible.

November 27, 1774. The town hath granted unto John Shaddock an allotment containing a single man's proportion, upon condition that he shall pay the town charges, both civil and ecclesiastical, that heretofore hath risen, or hereafter.. arise as the due proportion of such an allotment, and secondly, the use of two ... meadow, lying upon Cowpond brook,... provided he abide ... constantly and continually ... the wants of each ...

There is satisfactory evidence that the said John Shattuck, named in this record, was the son of the aforementioned William. It does not appear, that he ever came to Groton to reside. He was drowned in crossing the Charlestown ferry, September 14, 1675. He left a widow, (whose maiden name was Ruth Whitney, and who afterwards married Enosh Lawrence,) and four children, John, William, Samuel, and Ruth. All these came to Groton, and probably took the "allotment" made to the father, which was situated in the north part of the town. Their families (a part of them at least) appear in the Appendix. This last John, and his son John, were killed by Indians.

The next family in the catalogue at Groton is that of William and his two wives, Abigail Shattuck and Margaret Lund. By the first he had three sons and two daughters, and by the last, two sons and one daughter. His youngest son is the immediate ancestor of most of the Shattucks in Groton at this time, and is deserving a particular notice.

Job Shattuck, born February 11, 1735-6, was somewhat distinguished as a military character. His first enlistment was at the age of nineteen, in a company of Col. Monkton's troops, sent to drive the French from their encroachments on the English settlements in Nova Scotia. It is said, that being small of his age, he used a stratagem to appear tall, that he might pass muster. There is no evidence that he performed any service in the French war, other than in this campaign, which was short, but successful.

February 25, 176, he received a captain's commission from the Council of Massachusetts, for a short time only, ending on the first of April following. Under this commission, he marched with a company of seventy-five men, exclusive of subalterns and musicians, to Boston, about the time that town was evacuated by the British troops. This service lasted only eight days. In 1776, he commanded a company raised in Groton and the neighboring towns, and marched with them to Ticonderoga and Saratoga, and returned in January, 1777. In July, 1779, he received a captain's commission from the Council of Massachusetts, of the second company in the sixth regiment of Massachusetts militia, which office, it is supposed, he held till the peace.

He was an active and energetic agent in raising recruits for the army, during the revolutionary war. His two oldest sons enlisted and served therein for some time. He was strong and athletic, and an ardent advocate for liberty in its most extensive sense; but being without education, and the power of discerning the best means to attain and preserve it, he hastily engaged in measures, which, if they proved unsuccessful, must be disastrous to the actors therein, and if successful, destructive to the country. This is exemplified in the part he took in Shay's rebellion, related in another chapter.